

Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)

Verification Report

School name:	St Aloysius Catholic Primary School
School address and postcode:	Twig Lane, Liverpool, L36 2LF
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Award verifier:	Dr Helen Mills
Award adviser (if applicable):	
Date of verification:	9/12/2020

Commentary on the evidence provided:

The change team delivered an excellent presentation and the award evidence was outstanding, clear and concise. The change team, staff, governor, pupil and parent interviews were conducted with pride, passion, confidence and openness. A real sense of belonging and a committed team approach was evident, demonstrating the schools ability to work effectively as a team. This provided detailed information and allowed the adviser to better understand the context and background to the schools developments and achievements.

Strengths identified during verification:

St Aloysius Catholic Primary School is such a welcoming, positive and calm school, where everyone is cared for, valued, listened to, respected, nurtured and encouraged. Outstanding leadership, led by Aoibhinn O'Callaghan (Wellbeing Coordinator), is a critical factor in understanding the success of the school in promoting emotional wellbeing and mental health as core to the whole school community, and this has enabled the dedicated change team to flourish in their roles. The financial investment, skills, commitment and approach of the Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team, Change Team, Staff, Governors, and the whole school community has created innovative ways of working and a seamless

and consistent, welcoming, happy, none judgemental, caring, supportive, safe, nurturing, engaging, creative and aspirational culture.

An excellent and clear wellbeing vision, strategy, and embedded catholic ethos, which are all reflected in the positive culture and ethos of the school, are central to the success of the school, and have for a number of years, created a sense of autonomy, belonging, and shared responsibility, referred to during the visit as 'family'. This was once again refreshed during the Wellbeing Award for Schools process, demonstrating continued commitment to further support and improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of the whole school community. The result offers a powerful template for how emotional wellbeing of pupils, families and staff supports whole school progress.

An open door policy, stakeholder voice, listening to the needs of others, effective communication, implementing change and empowering people are very much part of how the school has achieved a shared sense of family where pupils, families and staff are confident to ask for or seek support, and staff are confident in identifying those who require support and signposting and/or providing support. The award evidence and interviews demonstrated how extensive, innovative and open this feature is, with staff going above and beyond what is expected to ensure that the whole school community is supported.

Caring, helpful, kindness, happy, confident, trusting, safe, respect, friendly, family, fun, proud, confident and enjoyment were key descriptions given in the interviews, and these are core to the positive, creative and nurturing culture of the school. Children feel extremely safe and happy in school, have many friends, and articulated well how the school supports them with their emotional wellbeing and mental health and how they are confident to express their feelings, to ask for support and actively help each other. Pupils commented on the enjoyment and satisfaction they get from learning inside the classroom and outdoors, how they try their best, can identify and talk openly about their feelings, are proud of their celebrated achievements and roles, and described numerous tools that they can use, activities they can do and trusted adults they can work with to promote their wellbeing. This has enabled the day-to-day and longer-term emotional wellbeing and mental health activities to flourish and was evident throughout the verification with the promotion of wellbeing, positivity, aspirations, achievements, coupled with a sense of calm and nurturing relationships, with children demonstrating exemplary behaviour and manners, confidence, engagement and enjoyment in learning and staff demonstrating confidence in delivering a range of excellent mental health and wellbeing lessons.

Significant investment in the facilities, environment, wide range of activities, staffing, training, with formal and informal support systems, was apparent during the school verification, and in provision and monitoring of interventions. The award process also highlighted the multiple examples of outstanding 'mental health and wellbeing' practice. Many of these have a major impact on the whole school community. Most notably the highly effective change team who play an active role in promoting wellbeing in school, meet regularly to discuss ideas, implement change based on stakeholder feedback and communicate to all stakeholders. The change team includes a range of staff and pupil wellbeing ambassadors with names, pictures and roles clearly displayed around school and on the school website wellbeing tab, including the videos of the confident pupil wellbeing ambassadors. Further examples include St Aloysius Passport (100 things to experience before you leave), Talking Tuesday's, Thankful Thursday's, Relax Kids, yoga, meditation, mindfulness, classroom calm music, air diffusers, worry box and worry monsters, wellbeing quotes, outdoor wellbeing hub, Jigsaw/PSHE curriculum, circle time, R.E., wellbeing displays including the promotion of the 5 ways to wellbeing, pupil shout out and ambassador board, positivity, achievements and rewards including Learning Heros and respect certificates, world mental health day, mental health awareness week,

anti-bullying week, daily wellbeing breaks, fundraising, care home visits, Everton mentoring programme, pupil experts, feelings charts/thermometer, school council and pupil voice, 1-1 and group targeted sessions including nurture, bereavement, speech and language, talk boost, motor skills, brain breaks and time in the sensory room, pupil profiles, outdoor learning, creative curriculum and wide range of extra curricular activities, school trips, free breakfast and snacks for all pupils, classroom rules and charter, the proactive approach to supporting families, parent assemblies and coffee mornings, PTA, the importance placed on the school wellbeing vision and catholic ethos, outstanding working relationships with outside agencies and the local community and promotion of mental health and wellbeing to the whole school community, even more so during COVID.

Children commented, “Wellbeing break helps get your mind relaxed. We have the feeling thermometers, Miss will ask you what’s up; knowing you have someone to speak to is a good thing. I love coming to school because it’s a place where you feel happy and safe, we have different ways to express ourselves in the wider curriculum, mentoring and the wellbeing wheel. Teachers help you in lessons; feel positive and your mind will grow positive and confident, try to never give up and work to achieve our goals. Every single person is really nice and caring, we have the kindness Elf and lots of friends. I like doing mindful colouring and putting things in our memory box. We bring in food, presents, raise money for CAFOD and do all we can to give to those who have less; makes us appreciate how lucky we are. We sang at Bluebell Nursing home and are doing christmas presents for them; it’s nice to be kind. We’re wellbeing ambassadors and make sure we look after everyone, try to make them feel comfortable and open up, and we’ve got worry boxes, happy jar and worry monsters. I feel proud that I’m a wellbeing ambassador, I try to implement things in school to make people feel happy and safe. When friends are sad, play with them and you make them feel better and it makes me feel happy too. When friends are stuck, I help them. I love to help people. In Jigsaw we speak about feelings and situations; keeping stuff inside isn’t good for your mental health and wellbeing and it feels like a weights been lifted. I’m comfortable speaking to anyone in school. Staff do the best they can for you. I was part of the school council, we did really good achievements like St Aloysius Child and felt proud. If we’re angry we’ve got boxes of stuff to help, it’s OK to have all feelings. If someones sad, we give out the happiness jar. School is awesome, lots of exciting activities like map reading, den building, team work, talking Tuesday’s, 5 ways to wellbeing, mindful colouring; it’s really fun. I love super movers 5 a day. My favourite is maths, come and see, art, P.E. and yoga”.

Staff wellbeing and professional learning have been prioritised, along with significant financial investment, and this is valued greatly by the highly skilled, many long standing and dedicated staff who feel that the strategies in place support their emotional wellbeing, enabling them to provide the most effective support to the children, parents and each other. The baseline questionnaires were used to inform future training, which has included whole school growth mindset, Jigsaw, developing outdoor learning, staff wellbeing including Hays online training subscription resilience, mindfulness, life balance, mindset, dealing with stress training, safeguarding training and two trained mental health first aiders. The school has committed to reducing staff stress, workload and improving wellbeing by writing a comprehensive wellbeing and mental health strategy, staff wellbeing handbook and policy, providing a dedicated wellbeing budget, health and wellbeing sessions, wellbeing performance management target, introducing staff rewards and treats, wellbeing box in toilets, wellbeing afternoon, posters on staff toilet doors, termly offer of PPA at home, flexible working, PPA room, a comfortable and positive staff room that includes an exercise machine, a wellbeing table showcasing gratitude and support including the super staff shout out board, free refreshments, an open door policy, and most importantly listening to the needs and suggestions of staff, having an understanding of family and work life and providing a system of pastoral support. Staff commented how supportive and approachable all staff are and how everyone looks out for

each other. Staff feel valued, connected, supported, enjoy their jobs and are proud to be a part of the St Aloysius Family. The staff questionnaire results demonstrated significant improvements in all areas.

Staff commented, “We’re a really close community. The wellbeing ambassadors are thriving in confidence, it’s given them a voice. Training courses for whole school staff are really good and we’re very good at identifying vulnerable children and provide a listening ear. Lots of staff are volunteering to deliver rainbows. HLTA training and planning for wellbeing and mental health has increased our confidence. That open door for parents, they feel really comfortable to talk to us, we have really good relationships with children and know families really well, Covid phone calls really helped, offering advice and providing lots of wellbeing support. Through the daily wellbeing activities and contact on seesaw, more families have reached out. We now have a one page termly report and option for a phone call. Children understand and realise there are so many positives to wellbeing and mental health. Families trust us and we look after their dignity. Children are really proud when they’ve completed their passport. The wellbeing break is good for the children and staff, you recharge, refocus and it improves quality of work and it picks me up. The Learning Mentor delivers Jigsaw and the children are so excited, they talk about it in a positive way, they focus, relax and enjoy it. It’s an amazing school; it’s like a family, feels like home, not work. I started as a volunteer; and staff really supported me in my career progression. Immense care for staff. It’s a spectacular place to work. I’m proud that the children and families trust in you, school is their safe place, seeing them grow, it makes such an impact. We can always go and speak to Becki the Learning Mentor and Mental Health First Aider, who will pass it on to SLT if you want her to. There’s been huge changes to staff wellbeing, it makes everyone happy. PPA at home for everyone means you can pick your children up from school, it’s flexible, staff cover you to take time for yourself. Staff workload has reduced, we work in teams, have brief learning walks, SLT help you with targets, PPA blocked afternoons, marking policy, phase leaders have additional management time and half a day wellbeing day for everyone was lovely. I feel valued. I’m less stressed as I’ve learnt to recognise when I’m stressed and can step back. We’re looking after ourselves more, we have a sense of choice, staff meetings have reduced and we can get reports done. We notice others and help them to look after themselves. I go to bed earlier and put my phone away. Every child deserves the best and they’ve developed resilience. We use positive language and have positive working relationships which we model to the children, we use calm voices and nurture children, we smile, it’s free and makes people’s day”.

Governors commented, “Wellbeing is at the forefront of school, it’s a Governor agenda item and we’re brought up to date. St Aloysius is welcoming, calm and well run. Staff are approachable. The school passport fits into wellbeing and families are praised and it boosts their wellbeing, everyone is always supported in school. The website has given wellbeing prominence, the wheel of wellbeing, signposting and it’s made clear parents can come in to school, along with the weekly newsletters and twitter. Training has led to staff understanding wellbeing and they’ve made changes to improve it. Staff are valued and have a purpose. There’s a structured approach, for example the Learning Mentor delivers Jigsaw and it’s helped to engage parents. R.E. values of kindness and caring are at the forefront. Everton in the community have made mental health and wellbeing practical and children have developed friendships and teamwork. Children visited charity shops as part of the TA’s community project and it changed their attitudes towards homelessness and they’ve developed empathy, it was pupil led and it brought it to life. The passport is now linked to the 5 ways to wellbeing, it’s a positive way for parents and children to recognise wellbeing. Children are at the heart of wellbeing. St Aloysius is a caring family who do what they say they will, that alongside collaborative working, strong church connections and community links is having an impact on everyone’s wellbeing”.

The proactive approach and numerous opportunities for parental engagement, effective communication, breaking down barriers, the development of trusting relationships between staff, parents and pupils, and excellent working relationships with outside agencies, should be commended and ensures that all children, including vulnerable children and their families are supported swiftly and effectively. This includes the open door policy for parent, staff meet and greet parents on the school yard, numerous opportunities for parents to get together, PTA, an outstanding school website including the wellbeing section, Twitter, newsletters, seasaw, school app, school based interventions, signposting and referrals made to outside agencies, and most importantly the whole school staff working alongside parents in a none judgemental way. Parent praise and gratitude for staff in school was exceptional.

Parents commented, “School is really supportive and nurturing, it’s like a family. They really supported my children with bereavement to develop their understanding. Lots of ways to keep us informed about wellbeing. The work on seesaw really helped the children, and they put work on to supplement wellbeing and mental health. Staff are always there to help, they’re on the yard and really approachable. Children do wellbeing activities in class, my daughter is teaching me yoga, they put family activities on twitter like colouring, different aspects of thinking, and it’s improved family quality time. School is amazing; they go out on a limb to help, the phone call picked me up, got me to where I needed to be, reassured me and looked after my children. There’s many clubs to try like sports, craft, yoga and drama; it’s really good. If I had a problem, I could approach anyone. They send food parcels to ease the burden. School know what her anxiety triggers are and build her confidence up; it’s amazing. My children are happy at school and that makes me happy. It’s the best choice I ever made; she’s come on leaps and bounds because of what they do. Teachers engage everyone at coffee mornings. It’s the best community family”.

The school has drawn together the threads that connect all the different work done and aspirations, and is able to demonstrate positive change in children, parents and staff. The school understands the importance of valuing each other, working as a collective team, promoting positively, building resilience, supporting and looking after the whole schools mental health and wellbeing, ensuring that children feel safe, secure and happy, which in turn impacts positivity on their educational attainment.

Impact:

Investment in staff wellbeing and training has resulted in a reduction in staff stress, workload and an increase in staff managing their own wellbeing and improved resilience, which has further strengthened staff’s sense of belonging, pride, motivation and job satisfaction.

Staff training in mental health and wellbeing has resulted in increased awareness and understanding of mental health. Staff are confident to talk about their own mental health and are confident that they have the skills and tools to support their own and their pupils’ emotional wellbeing and mental health. Staff feel that school listens to their views and needs. Staff are confident in recognising the factors that affect their children and families mental health and know how to refer for support to ensure that children and their families receive support quickly, preventing escalation of mental health issues.

Whole school community initiatives has increased awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing, resulting in open conversations, using shared language, and everyone recognising when they are not mentally well, and are able to ask for support or to support themselves and others confidently to improve their wellbeing by using a range of techniques, contributing to improved resilience.

Outstanding leadership, effective stakeholder voice and consultation mechanisms, clear communication and the wellbeing vision and strategy has led to a shared responsibility and ownership that promotes and empowers everyone to take responsibility of their own and others wellbeing and mental health.

An embedded happy, caring, respectful, empathetic, positive school culture and ethos, investment in highly trained, committed and nurturing staff, the highly effective and passionate change team, alongside the new Jigsaw curriculum, a creative and varied curriculum and extra curricular activities and targeted interventions has resulted in all pupils, including those with additional wellbeing and mental health needs, being provided with a safe space and for interventions to be delivered, enabling their needs to be met. This has promoted confidence in children's ability to talk openly about their feelings, to manage their own mental health, and to support each other, demonstrating developments in their social and emotional skills, self-esteem, confidence, empathy, independence and resilience, enabling young people to thrive and excel in their learning.

Areas for development:

As already highlighted by the school, continue to work collaboratively across the Archdiocese and local authority, provide further staff development/training in mental health and wellbeing, including training more mental health first aiders, deliver parental mental health and wellbeing events (post lockdown) and monitor stakeholder questionnaire findings.

Consider introducing designated drop in times for staff to meet with the mental health first aiders.

Consider ways to recruit parent wellbeing ambassadors.

Having become more aware of the multiple examples of outstanding practice, continue to share the experiences and approaches with other schools, your local authority and mental health forums.

Verifier recommendation:

St Aloysius Catholic Primary School has achieved the Wellbeing Award for Schools. This award covers the following 3 years. I look forward to the work the school will undertake over this time.

Head teacher comments:

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